

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH



COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO HUMAN SERVICES SYSTEM

- ☐ 385 North Arrowhead Avenue - San Bernardino, CA 92415-0160 - (909) 884-4056
- ☐ 1647 East Holt Boulevard - Ontario, CA 91761 - (909) 458-9673
- ☐ 13911 Park Avenue - Victorville, CA 92392 - (760) 243-3773
- ☐ San Bernardino County Vector Control Program
2355 East 5th Street - San Bernardino, CA 92415-0064 - (909) 388-4600

JIM LINDLEY
Interim Public Health Director

MAURY MANLIQUIS, DO, MPH
Interim Public Health Officer

DANIEL J. AVERA, REHS
Chief of Environmental Health

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Contact: Corwin Porter R.E.H.S
Program Manager
(909) 387-4692

WARNING TO ALL RESIDENTS ANNUAL MUSSEL QUARANTINE

The San Bernardino County Division of Environmental Health Services would like to remind residents of the annual mussel quarantine. The annual quarantine on sport-harvested mussels taken from the ocean waters of California for human consumption is effective from May 1 through October 31. The quarantine affects all species of mussels harvested by the public anywhere on the California coast, including all bays.

The statewide mussel quarantine is intended to prevent human cases of paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) and domoic acid poisoning (DAP). The majority of human cases of PSP illnesses occur between spring and fall. PSP affects the human central nervous system, producing a tingling around the mouth and fingertips within a few minutes to a few hours after eating toxic shellfish. These symptoms typically are followed by lack of coordination, slurred speech, and difficulty swallowing. In severe poisonings, complete muscular paralysis and death can occur.

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Symptoms of DAP can occur within 30 minutes to 24 hours after eating toxic seafood. In mild cases, symptoms may include vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramps, headache, and dizziness. These symptoms disappear completely within several days. In severe cases, the victim may experience difficulty breathing, permanent loss of short term memory, seizures, coma, or death.

There is no known antidote to the toxins and cooking cannot be relied upon to destroy them. Anyone experiencing symptoms of PSP or DAP should seek immediate medical care. Shellfish for human consumption should only be taken from areas free of sewage or chemical contamination during all times of the year. Commercially harvested shellfish **are not** included in the annual quarantine. All commercial shellfish harvesters in California are certified by the state and therefore are subject to strict requirements to ensure that all oysters, clams, and mussels entering the marketplace are free of toxins. Commercial harvesting is stopped immediately if potentially dangerous levels of toxins are found.